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China's Muslims through Western Eyes

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During the Republican era (1912-1949), the European community in Xinjiang included two groups whose written accounts constitute an important resource for the study of China's Muslim northwest. This article considers, first, the British consular officials assigned to Xinjiang and the records they produced; and second, the Protestant missionaries[1] who hoped to convert Xinjiang's predominantly Muslim population. While other Europeans briefly lived in the region or traveled through it between 1912 and 1949, these two groups are unique in that they produced written records covering most of the Republican period. Despite the wealth of information the Westerners produced, however, these materials have been undervalued and under-utilized. As will be asserted in the following pages, viewing Muslim Xinjiang through these "Western eyes" provides insight into both the social and political history of this contested Chinese borderland.

Much of the existing scholarly research on Xinjiang has relied on Chinese language sources; the region was, after all, recognized internationally as part of China and Chinese officials governed the area, with varying degrees of success. The reports and documents they generated (and the articles and books they later wrote based on their experiences) are important to our understanding of the region's history, but they have been privileged over English and other European language materials that are seen by some as poor second cousins in terms of their value. The latter are criticized as being

[1] Because I have not had the opportunity to research the Roman Catholic mission in Xinjiang, this paper will include discussion of the Protestant movement only.

tainted by orientalism and chauvinism, as well as political, military or religious agendas that skewed the writers' interpretations and observations. While there are undoubtedly biases evident in the Westerners' writings, Chinese sources carry their own sense of cultural superiority as well as an overarching political agenda. Most Han Chinese in the region came as government appointees or as part of the military, and they brought with them their own stereotypical views of the region's Muslim population. Just as Westerners arrived with a mission to "civilize" China, Han also brought a "Chinese civilizing project" when they came to borderlands like Xinjiang which were – and generally still are – regarded as backward. Chinese from all walks of life also shared a single unifying political goal: retaining the territory as part of the modern Chinese state. Thus Chinese, like Westerners, wrote from a specific cultural perspective and brought with them an agenda not necessarily welcomed by the local population.

Unlike the Chinese, however, Westerners in Xinjiang were relatively disinterested observers of the local scene. Although foreign officials focused mainly on political and military events, they also sought to provide accurate reports on regional affairs, and they developed multiple sources of information in order to do so. Their relative disinterest means that some of their reports and interpretations carry greater objectivity than Chinese sources for the same events, as illustrated below.

Accessibility of documents is a related issue beyond the scope of this paper, but let me offer the following brief comments. Today, Chinese language documents are more readily available than ever before in both Taiwan and PRC archives. However, in the latter case some categories of material are only open to those scholars with official contacts and/or Communist Party approval. The selective nature of access to materials on Xinjiang (and other minority regions) suggests that the archives may hold documents which conflict with the current official interpretation of history and, therefore, are not to be made available to any researcher who might write a politically unacceptable view of the region's past. Perhaps when archives are fully open, the value of Chinese materials overall can be re-assessed. But based on a variety of materials I have seen in both Taiwan and China, it appears that Chinese documents at times provide only one side of a very complex story. The largely undervalued Western language materials make a significant and, in some instances, singular contribution and, as some examples below suggest, contain information unlikely to be found in any Chinese sources, open or not.

One category of materials not included in this discussion are those in the local Muslim languages, principally in Uyghur. Prior to 1949, the Uyghurs and other Muslims constituted roughly 80% of Xinjiang's population, while the Chinese were less than 5%. Nonetheless, Chinese was the language of the government and military, and thus Chinese language sources appear predominant in Chinese archives. Although I have seen a few documents in Uyghur, written in the Arabic script which was the form used prior to 1949 (and again after 1980), it appears that few of these survived. Those that did (or that are available to foreign scholars) are insufficient in number to chart the history of the period in question.[2] Since the fall of the USSR, writings by local individuals pertaining to Xinjiang's political history have begun to appear in edited collections produced in the newly independent states of Central Asia. I have not had access to these and thus cannot assess their importance, but a new generation of scholars in the United States and Europe has begun to draw on this material for their current research. Their findings are already re-shaping our knowledge, as suggested in other chapters in the current work,[3] although much research awaits before key events and individuals' roles can be more fully understood.

All written sources carry their authors' imprint in one form or another, and therefore, as sociologist Larry Grossberg has succinctly put it, "the meaning of a text is always the site of a struggle."[4] In China, that struggle is not simply academic or theoretical but deeply political. In sensitive regions like Xinjiang there is considerable tension over all historical writing. Versions of history produced by Uyghur scholars are banned, and while these continue to circulate in underground copies or by word of mouth, officials seek to counteract these alternative histories by requiring university students to read the officially approved texts. As Gardner Bovingdon has observed of competing versions of history today in Xinjiang, the Uyghurs "stubborn resistance to the party's ideological claims have made history one of the hottest zones of contention in Xinjiang."[5] History is clearly not just about past events: in Xinjiang it is part of an on-going ideological struggle. In these circumstances, it is vital that all available records be used in an effort

[2] For example, at the Second Historical Archives in Nanjing, I was allowed to see a Uighur primary school text in the Arabic script, written by Saifudin. In Taiwan, there is a copy of the 1946 agreement between the Ili-based separatist movement in the same script, along with the Chinese version of the same. While these contribute to our knowledge, they are fragments of limited use in documenting the major events in Xinjiang's modern history.

[3] For example, David Brophy, a doctoral candidate at Harvard University, whose work appears in this volume, uses some of these recently available materials.

[4] Larry Grossberg, 1986, p. 86.

[5] Gardner Bovingdon, 2004, p. 353.

to interpret and understand Xinjiang's history, and, in the process, to provide a base on which future historians can build.

A brief survey of the kinds of reports and information to be found in reports, letters, and commercial publications by Consular officers is summarized below. It is followed by a similar discussion of missionary publications. In each case, examples are offered that indicate the usefulness of each category of sources and how they extend our understanding of the region's complicated history.

British Consuls

British consuls first arrived in China following the first Opium War (1839-1842) and they remained an integral part of the British presence in China until 1949. Their initial role included the "attainment of the goodwill and esteem of officials and people",[6] but expanded over time to include a range of consular responsibilities. In the 19th century, many of the Consuls viewed China as an inferior, backward state plagued by obsolete institutions and widespread corruption. A sense of cultural superiority was underscored by overwhelming British technological superiority in warfare.

From the beginning, the official British establishment in Xinjiang differed from consulates in China proper. In general, the consuls assigned to the region were better prepared for their duties and more able as linguists than Consuls appointed to posts in China proper. The first Consul to serve in the region set the standard for future appointees. George Macartney (1867-1945) arrived in Kashgar, the major trading center of southwestern Xinjiang, in 1890. He had traveled overland with Lt. Col. Francis Younghusband,[7] who was later to gain fame – or infamy – for his actions in Tibet in 1904. While Younghusband continued on to India across the Karakoram Mts., Macartney remained at Kashgar, in part to represent British trading interests but also to report on Russian activities there. The "Great Game" played out between the British empire and Tsarist Russia necessitated, in the British view, a permanent post at Kashgar to keep an eye on possible Russian expansion into Xinjiang and Tibet. Macartney ably filled the position.

Macartney was uniquely qualified for his post. Born in China, he spoke fluent Chinese – a skill not required of China Consuls until the 20th century. After his education in Europe, he returned to Asia as an interpreter which led

[6] P.D. Coates, 1988, p. 30.

[7] Born in Nanjing to a Chinese mother and Scottish father, bilingual Macartney left China at age 10, was educated in London, and graduated from a French university (C.P. Skrine & Pamela Nightingale, 1997, pp. 2-3.

to his trip with Younghusband and, eventually, the assignment in Kashgar. He was there over a decade before the British government officially appointed him British Consul in 1904. (The wary Qing dynasty delayed recognition until 1908). In 1911 the position was up-graded to Consul-General, and Macartney remained in that position until his retirement in 1918.

Not only was the post founded by an unusual candidate. Macartney and future Consuls (with two exceptions) received their appointments from the British government of India and were drawn from the Indian Political Service. At times, their reports went both to the Viceroy of India as well as to the British ambassador in Beijing. After the founding of the Chinese Republic in 1912, it became standard procedure for the Kashgar post to have a Vice-Consul appointed from the British consular service in China. The latter was generally considered the expert in Chinese affairs, while the Consul-General post usually went to someone with expertise in British Indian foreign policy. Most spoke Chinese or Russian; C. P. Skrine (1888-1974), who served from 1922-1924, spoke neither but did speak Persian which he had opportunity to use to good effect.[8]

In general, duties of the Consul-General at Kashgar were the same as those of Consuls elsewhere in China. He was to represent the interests of the British government and all British subjects in the region. In Xinjiang, the latter included Indians who traded regularly with Xinjiang. Like all British subjects, they enjoyed privileges guaranteed by treaty rights, and thus when trouble arose, the Consul was obliged to intervene. Trade matters in fact occupied much of their time, and the consular reports are filled with the Consul-General's representations on behalf of British Indian traders. But from the first appointment at the end of the 19th century onwards, a primary concern was the activity of the Russian empire and its successor, the USSR. British Consular reports, which sometimes appeared weekly, detailed the activities of the local Russian consuls and provided military intelligence as well as summaries of local political and military developments.

Macartney and most of his successors found Kashgar a fascinating posting, although the extreme isolation of the city and the sometimes tenuous communication links with the rest of the world doubtless brought its share of stress. Their reports and letters are available in the India Office Records, housed in the British Library, London, under the "Political & Secret" designation (L/P & S/). Related documents and additional consular reports

[8] See C. P. Skrine [1926], 1986

are held in the Public Record Office, London. The kinds of information we have as a result of the Consuls' detailed reports, interviews, and personal travels cover a wide range of topics: political developments; Russians, both "White" and "Red"; British Indian traders and their merchandise; textiles; opium; Swedish missionaries; "Tungan gold"; activities of the Hui (Chinese Muslims also referred to as Tungans); interviews with local military and political figures such as the Emirs of Khotan and Ma Hushan; Afghan-Indian-Chinese relations; and so on. Commercial publications authored by some Consuls following their retirement from the service add information on local geology, botany, ornithology, and all manner of "flora and fauna."[9] Those who hunted, like Eric Teichman (1884-1944), provided lists of wildlife. Photographers, like C.P. Skrine, added spectacular shots of remote mountain trails. Most of the Kashgar Consuls traveled at one time or another through the southern oases towns and, in some cases, as far as the provincial capital, adding both to their photographic record and their knowledge of areas beyond Kashgar.

The British post at Kashgar remained the only one in the region until permission was given for a second which was opened at Ürümchi in the 1940s. In 1943, an American consular official was added: the first appointee was O. Edmund Clubb (1901-1989). The officers from both countries assigned to Ürümchi in the 1940s spoke Chinese or Russian, and sometimes both. Their reports are especially valuable for the period of the Ili Rebellion, leaders of which remained important political figures from 1944 until the region was handed over to the CCP in 1949 by Guomindang officials. As late as 1949-1950, the Consuls relayed as much information as they could on local affairs, providing eye-witness accounts of the last days of Guomindang rule and the arrival of the People's Liberation Army.

Among the examples of material that would not be part of the historical record without the presence of the Consuls are their first-hand assessments of local leaders and their roles in political and military events. On several occasions they interviewed important local figures. For example, in 1937, General Mahmud of Kashgar met with the British Consul-General when the latter was in Peshawar (now in Pakistan) to ask for his support to be able to return to Kashgar.[10] Ten years later, a Uyghur leader in the province's coalition government which had formed in 1946 met with both the British and American Consuls at Ürümchi. In November of 1947, Isa Yusuf

[9] *Ibid*. Skrine was also interested in folklore and local customs. His book includes chapters on story tellers as well as the poems and songs enjoyed by Kashgar's Muslim population.
[10] L/P & S/12/2387 Coll. 12/46. Dated July 2, 1937.

Alptekin (1901-1995) asserted that he could no longer continence what he viewed as Chinese (Nationalist) oppression of the local Muslim population,[11] a view he would not have expressed to local Chinese officials.

Another provocative interview dates from the same period. In February of 1947, John Hall Paxton, representing the USA, and Walter Graham, representing the British, interviewed a Mongolian whose name card identified him as Minchur Tsebang Dorje, Torgut noyon[12]. He asserted that he had been offered a place as one of two Mongolian representatives in an independent East Turkestan Republic which was soon to be established incorporating all of Xinjiang. Both Consuls speculated on his reasons for approaching them: Paxton believed that the story was just an effort to push the Chinese toward offering local rebels better terms while Graham saw the story as unreliable.[13] Encounters like this one, including the confusion it sowed, found their way into reports as officials sought to keep abreast of a rapidly evolving situation.

What is not in the files is also important. There was suspicion among Chinese in the region that the British had colluded somehow to encourage the 1933 rebellion and the first East Turkestan Republic. Although it is always possible that some files from the period have not been released to the public, the many reports sent from Kashgar during that time show no evidence of such support; indeed, they reveal a Consul intent on protecting his staff and avoiding any entanglement in what he clearly saw as a locally generated anti-Chinese movement.

Consular files can also be used as a source on other Europeans in the region. In particular, the files record relations between the mission community and the Consulate. Some Consuls viewed the missionary presence positively and said so both in official reports and in their own later writings. Others shaped their opinions according to the audience for which they were writing. In his book on travels in Xinjiang, Sir Eric Teichman, for example, wrote that the missionaries at Kashgar had "an honorable record of many years of philanthropic, medical and missionary work to its credit in Kashgar." He

[11] L/P & S/12/2361 12/24. Eric Shipton, Kashgar, November 19, 1947. Also cited in Linda Benson, 1990, pp. 164-165.

[12] [This interesting report about a Torgut prince named "Minchur" concerns Minžur, al. Ming wang (1903-1975), eldest son of Palta wang (1882-1920), head of a banner of Old Torgut in the Altaï district. Minžur's sister (1907-1983) was a trendy young person known in Western Europe, especially in France and Belgium, in the late 20's and the 30's. as the "Princess Nirgidma de Torhout"] (F.A.)

[13] L/P & S/12/2360.Walter Graham Dispatch Number 23, dated 7 February 1947.

likewise praised the CIM missionaries for their work in a remote region: "The isolation, harsh climate, lack of amenities and unfriendly atmosphere combine to make Ürümchi one of the most trying mission stations in the world in which to serve. The courageous little band of men who labor there in the service of the CIM are a devoted company."[14] He also briefly mentioned women working in the service of the CIM, particularly Mildred Cable and the French sisters, Eva and Francesca, noting they were well-known travelers in northwestern China. While praising them for their writings and their tenacity in his book, however, in an official report on his 1936 visit to the region he noted that, given the un-welcoming atmosphere in Ürümchi, the city was "no place for missionary ladies at present," and he viewed their current visit to be "mistaken and purposeless."[15]

Regardless of their personal opinions, relations between foreign government appointees and the Western mission community in Xinjiang seemed generally amiable, although this varied over the decades. The following discussion of the missions and the kinds of records they produced illustrates how each group ultimately supported the other in what was, after all, one of the most remote corners of the globe.

Xinjiang's Christian Missions and Their Records

In the 19th century, many British officials held a rather unflattering opinion of missionaries, as did some of the major publications of the day in England. For example, *The Times* in 1869 asserted that missionaries were not well-educated and "not quite gentlemen."[16] The often well-connected, well-educated Consuls saw the average missionary as their social inferior, and as incidents involving Chinese and foreign missionaries increased, consular reports "deplored the missionary tactlessness or obstinacy which often created the violence."[17]

1) The Swedish Mission

Such was not generally the case in Xinjiang, however. A number of the Kashgar Consuls came to know and admire members of the Swedish Mission Alliance which founded a mission in Kashgar not long after Macartney himself had arrived, in 1892. With a few exceptions, most of the Kashgar missionaries were Swedish, making the journey to Xinjiang overland from India rather than through China. They brought

[14] Eric Teichman, 1937, p. 114.
[15] L/P & S/12/2371. Chinese Turkestan. "Sinkiang: Consular Mission to Urumchi. General Report of Sir Eric Teichman on his journey and experiences." March, 1936.
[16] Quotes in P.D. Coates, 1988, p. 182.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 183.

a mix of skills and abilities that proved valuable to both the local community and foreign residents. Most learned the local language after arrival; some arrived with knowledge of Middle Eastern languages and some had studied Islam in preparation for their service. For example, British national Rachel Orde Wingate, a Cambridge University graduate who joined the mission in 1924, held a degree in Arabic and Persian. Swedish mission member Gustaf Raquette (1871-1945), along with his wife Hanna (1884-1979), was a linguist who prepared one of the first dictionaries of the Kashgar dialect of Turki, or modern Uyghur.[18] Gustaf Ahlbert (1884-1943) and Oskar Hermansson (1889-1951) both knew Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic. They added knowledge of Turki and worked together on a translation of the Bible as well as other Christian literature. Numerous visitors to the city received medical care at the Swedish Mission Hospital. For example, Dr. Christian Hermanrud treated the scholar and future Swedish diplomat, Gunnar Jarring (1907-2002) when he fell ill with typhoid during his visit to Kashgar in 1929-1930 and doubtless saved his life.[19] In an account of the mission and its medical outreach, Swedish author John Hultvall estimated that some 400,000 people received treatment through the hospital and at the Yarkand dispensary.[20] The Swedes brought in the city's first modern printing press which produced religious literature as well as printed the local paper currency and a weekly newspaper until 1937.[21] The mission's services did not guarantee the missionaries an enthusiastic local welcome, and periodically the missionaries' clashes with the local religious establishment required intervention by the Consul who informally represented the Swedes at their government's request. Details on such incidents are contained in the Consular files. But overall, violence was not common. And, given the remoteness of the place and the limited size of the European community, the Westerners inevitably formed their own little society. Friendships between the Consuls, their wives, and members of the mission were more common than not.[22]

[18] Raquette produced a Turki-English dictionary and also an "Eastern Turki Grammar", Part I and II, in 1912, as well as "Vocabulary and Grammatica Kashgar" in 1935.Copies of these are held at the national Archives in Stockholm, Sweden.
[19] Jarring, 1986, pp. 124-125.
[20] Hultvall, 1987, p. 16.
[21] The press began operations in 1912 and was used to print religious literature, but the government required them to print official documents as well including the local paper currency.
[22] See for example, the books by Macartney's wife (1879-1949): Lady Catherina Macartney, 1985.

The missionaries' efforts to convert local Muslims to Christianity proved surprisingly effective. The Kashgar congregation eventually reached 200, mainly former Muslims. Their Boys' and Girls' Homes, the hospital, and their wish to be of service to the people of the city all contributed to their success. But that success, coupled with an increasingly uncertain political future for the region, also may have contributed to the Ürümchi government's decision to order the mission closed in 1938. The British Consul-General took responsibility for the mission buildings and other non-movable property. On a brief return visit to the mission by two of the Swedish missionaries in 1947, they discovered that most of the buildings were in ruins.[23]

The materials collected by mission members and other Swedes who visited Kashgar reside in the National Archives in Stockholm. The East Turkestan Collection, developed by Samuel Franne, contains everything from photographs and texts to personal diaries. Most of the collection is in Swedish; based on the items I have seen translated into English, these records, too, appear to be a valuable addition to our knowledge of the region and, in particular, the lives of local people as seen through Western eyes. Like the Consuls, the missionaries also took photographs. Subjects include everything from festivals, the construction of houses, caravan roads, and local people. Carl Persson had a special interest in local plants and one box of materials in the collection is devoted to his carefully collected information.

2) The China Inland Mission (CIM)

The most easily accessible mission records are those of the Protestant groups active in the region, principally the China Inland Mission (CIM). Articles and books by CIM missionaries are numerous and appeared in both British and North American editions. Records begin with the arrival of the CIM's George Hunter (1862-1946) who reached Xinjiang in 1904. He wrote relatively little in the way of personal accounts or letters back to British congregations (a common CIM practice), confining his writing to translations of the Gospel and other religious works. Far more prolific were his British colleagues, Mildred Cable (1878-1952) and the French sisters, especially Francesca (1871-1960) who evangelized in Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang during the 1920s and 1930s.[24] Their books and many articles, based largely on their travel diaries and journals, provide glimpses into the lives of

[23] Hultvall, 1987, pp. 27-28.
[24] On Mildred Cable, see Benson, 2005; on all three women, see Benson, forthcoming 2007.

local Muslim women, for example, and family life.[25] Such matters are rarely alluded to in Chinese officials' reports[26] (at least, to the best of my knowledge) and, with the exception of C.P. Skrine's books, are largely absent from Consular reports as well.

Missionary records also add to our understanding of political history. In 1932-1933, the young Muslim warlord, Ma Zhongying (ca.1912-ca.1937), rode into Xinjiang leading 10,000 men and attacked the provincial capital of Ürümchi (then known as Dihua). Bloody and brutal fighting erupted. Chinese sources place the blame for the hundreds of deaths on the religious antagonism between "the races" and the eagerness of the Hui and the Turki for revenge. Although the carnage that resulted from the onslaught of Ma and his men is attested to in all the sources, it is in the writings of eye-witnesses like George Fox-Holmes that we find graphic accounts. Holmes, who was in Xinjiang first as a young missionary recruit and later as the last British Consul at Ürümchi, described how the Chinese population of Ürümchi exacted revenge on the city's Muslim inhabitants that winter by setting the Muslim quarter of the city ablaze. Many died and Holmes himself saw the charred bodies in the ruins. Worse, he witnessed Chinese soldiers cutting down any who fled from the burning buildings and hacking the bodies to pieces.[27] He himself treated the wounds of those slashed in the fighting.[28] The long-standing animosities between Chinese and Muslims are more graphically recounted in these sources than in any others dealing with the same incident.

Missionaries' concerns over people caught up in warfare meant that mission records are also one of the best sources on the impact of local warfare. Men like the CIM's Otto Schoerner, Raymond Joyce, and others who served as doctors and medical aids, saw first-hand the wounded and dead.

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[25] Some British Consuls' wives also wrote of their encounters with Muslim women, notably Diana Shipton, whose book (1950) gives her view on Turki women's lives toward the end of the Republican period (1946-1948).

[26] Intermarriage between Muslim and Han Chinese was, however, a subject on which most sources commented. An article calling for prohibition of such marriages appeared in the *Xinjiang Ribao*, August 4, 1946, p. 3. The topic was also raised in discussions between John Hall Paxton, Walter Graham, and Muslim leader Isa Yusuf Alptekin, cited earlier in this paper.

[27] George Fox-Holmes, unpublished manuscript.

[28] A few details are also given in Marshall Broomhall's account of the life and death of Dr. Emil Fischbacher, a volunteer with the CIM who arrived just weeks before the attack on Ürümchi. Broomhall does not give as much detail as Fox-Holmes, but the account is clear enough in its indictment of Chinese troops' actions against unarmed civilians. See Marshall Broomhall, 1934, pp. 27, 28.

Missionaries traveling through the region also saw, and recorded, the suffering that came with the arrival of warlord armies in small and large Gobi towns. The 1933 uprising, for example, led to massive displacement of Turki residents of Hami (Qumul) and its environs and nearly destroyed the city. While the destruction is well-documented, the despair and misery this devastation caused to individual families is documented primarily in missionary accounts.

Sometimes, missionaries found themselves called upon to treat those who contributed directly to such misery. George Fox-Holmes wrote of treating the wounds of one of the Chinese officers who had ordered the destruction of the Muslim quarter. Mildred Cable and the French sisters tended the wounded warlord Ma Zhongying after he was shot in both legs during the battle for Ürümchi. The women were at Dunhuang tending to refugees displaced by the fighting Ma had initiated; they were given no choice but to travel to his military base. They developed little sympathy for the young man who they described as arrogant and cruel. They were relieved when he finally allowed them to return to Dunhuang.

Conclusion

The two groups of Westerners had each arrived in Xinjiang with their own agendas which, in turn, shaped the kinds of writing they produced. British and, later, American Consuls focused on information useful to their governments, while missionaries wrote more about the difficulties of their work and the need for greater financial support in order to continue and expand their mission and its related services. Not surprisingly, both groups relied to some extent on stereotypes in their writings, as indicated in remarks quoted earlier in this chapter. But Westerners' records also include some distinctly un-stereotypical observations.

Among the most surprising remarks about Muslim society are those that directly counter stereotypical Western notions about Muslim women's status. One such intriguing account is that of British Consul C.P. Skrine, who served in Kashgar during a time of stability and peace (1922-1924). Having previously served in the Middle East, he commented favorably on the relative freedom accorded to Kashgari women and asserted that their circumstances were, in his view, far superior to those of Muslim women elsewhere. He noted the presence of women in the public markets purchasing food and household items, and observed them riding into town in their own donkey carts. He reported on Kashgari women who ran their own small businesses and who appeared to have autonomy in financial matters as well as in their personal lives. His wife had accompanied him to Kashgar,

and she visited the women's quarters of private homes to attend pre-nuptial and other celebrations. She also was invited to marriage ceremonies where she was entertained by local women. Her descriptions, included in her husband's book, are of special interest for Turkistani women's history.[29]

Missionary writings also contain examples that fully support Skrine's decidedly un-stereotypical view of Muslim women's status. In addition to agreeing that Kashgari women had greater freedom than women in other Muslim societies, for example, mission sources also depicted individual Muslim women as strong and capable, and the missionaries clearly regarded them with respect. Female missionaries had access to the women's quarters and established strong friendships with local Muslim women. Although negative references to the ways in which women were treated are common, particularly with regard to divorce which the Westerners saw as inevitably disadvantaging wives, in general Muslim women are portrayed positively in many mission sources.[30]

In contrast to positive depictions of women, Skrine's assessment of Muslim men as a whole did not deviate much from the unflattering images common to the period. In one particularly insulting passage, he wrote: "It must be remembered that the average Turki man is a lazy, good-natured, easy-going, rather slow-witted person, so that the sharper-tongued, quicker-witted and more energetic woman more than holds her own..."[31]

The latter assessment is echoed in Chinese sources. One of the most widely read Chinese memoirs of service in Xinjiang is *Turkistan Tumult* by Aitchen Wu (1891-1962). Well-educated and well-traveled, Wu was sent to the northwest to negotiate a peace settlement in the early 1930s at which time he met many among the western community. He maintained his connections with some of them, including William Drew, who had served with the CIM in Xinjiang. In fact, when both were in London in 1939, they visited the former British Consul-General at Kashgar, Col. Thomson Glover, who was then living in Dorset. In his written comments on Xinjiang Muslims, he differentiates between the Hui and the Turki population, but shares the rather negative perceptions of his British colleagues. Of the Hui, he writes: "...it cannot be denied that their religious intolerance is a source of continual trouble in Sinkiang (*sic*); nor does there seem the slightest prospect of their

[29] Skrine, [1926], 1986, pp. 197-200. His wife also spoke colloquial Turki (Uyghur) and she could thus understand much of what was said as well as record her observations of wedding celebrations, for example.
[30] For further details, see Benson, 1993, pp. 227-248.
[31] *Ibid*., p. 202.

settling down, for they are not easily reached by the forces of progress, and despite their trading interests, remain a race apart." [32] In contrast, his view of the Muslim majority, the Turki population, encompassed both good and bad traits. On the positive side, he writes: "Honesty is their pride, and they rarely break their word. They are law-abiding by nature and bear misfortune submissively. Drunkenness disgusts them, and to lend money at high interest is considered disgraceful."[33] On the other hand, he writes: "They are for the most part timid, pleasure-loving and indolent, and they cannot be relied on in an emergency...On the whole they live on good terms with the Chinese, but they rarely master the Chinese language…"[34] The latter remark is especially sino-centric as virtually no Chinese bothered to learn the language of the people over whom they sought to rule.

Wu and Skrine shared the view that the Muslim population was in need of leadership and guidance, and both, therefore, saw the Chinese as necessary to the region's stability and development. This paternalistic attitude was shared by Eric Teichman who served as British Consul at Kashgar before being appointed as an adviser to the British Embassy in Beijing in the 1930s. In a book about his 1936 visit to Ürümchi, he noted that he saw the region through "Chinese eyes"[35] and avowed that the Chinese had "a genius for colonial administration."[36]

Not all foreign government officials shared the above views, however. By the 1940s, the British and American Consuls wrote reports focusing on Muslim opposition to continued Chinese rule. They sought information on Muslim leaders defying the Chinese, including Osman Batur (1889-1951), of the region's Kazakh population, and Ahmetjan Kasimi (1914-1949), a leader of the Ili River valley based East Turkestan Republic, a secessionist state which existed from 1944-1949. The British representatives also recorded the failings of both sides in the Xinjiang coalition government of 1946. While the Chinese (Nationalists) negotiated for a peace settlement, they continued to build up their military in the region. The Turkestani representatives roundly criticize this and other efforts by the Chinese to expand their authority throughout the region. Unable to respond militarily, the Muslim-led movement published newspapers printed in Turki and Chinese, as well as other local languages, to put their case before the public. Issues of these

[32] Aitchen K. Wu, [1940] 1984, p. 214.
[33] Wu, pp. 220, 221.
[34] Wu, p. 221.
[35] Teichman, 1937, p. 151.
[36] *Ibid*., p. 149.

publications, as well as the Chinese-language provincial paper, the *Xinjiang Daily* (*Xinjiang Ribao*), and other materials were collected by the Consuls and, as a result, are available for consultation outside of China.

After 1949, a few former Consuls published their memoirs. These offer an overview of the Muslim northwest based on first-hand experience and provide another relatively disinterested set of sources on key events in the region's history. Similarly, memoirs of Chinese leaders (only in Chinese language versions thus far) also appeared in print, including those of Burhan Shahidi (1912-1989) and Saifudin Aziz (1915-2003), two important Muslim leaders whose careers extended well beyond 1949. Both men were honored members of the Chinese Communist Party by the time they died, and their accounts of Xinjiang's history support fully the official Party line. Until it is possible to corroborate their versions of events, however, questions of accuracy, as well as authenticity, remain.[37]

The Chinese language memoirs mentioned above underscore the need to use multiple sources to examine Xinjiang's past. While each set of "western eyes" produced writings that have their own limitations, they nonetheless provide alternative interpretations of key events and individuals in Xinjiang history that can be used with other sources in an effort to interpret the historical record. With access to Chinese archives limited, and official Chinese accounts offering only the Party-approved version of events, a careful reading of all available sources remains vital to understanding the history and culture of China's only Muslim-majority region.

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[37] Colleagues in China and elsewhere acknowledge that Chinese scholars served as ghost-writers of these accounts as both men were very elderly by the time these memoirs appeared.

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